

MARIA CANTWELL
WASHINGTON



United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4705

March 20, 2023

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E.
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

I am writing in support of the Cowlitz Indian Tribe's application to the FY2022 National Culvert Removal, Replacement, and Restoration Grant Program ("Culvert Program") for the Indian Mary Springs Fish Passage Project.

The Cowlitz Indian Tribe is applying for \$2.5 million in Culvert Program funding in partnership with BNSF Railway to remove an undersized 3-foot culvert pipe and install a 90-foot bridge span.

The Tribe and BNSF identified a high-priority barrier on Indian Mary Springs, the primary tributary to Franz Lake in the Franz Lake National Wildlife Refuge. The new 12-foot-wide channel will ensure sufficient space for wood and sediment and restore fish access to 2,200 feet of productive wall-based seeps and spring water. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Refuge includes important brood and rearing areas for juvenile salmon. The new channel will restore natural processes, increase fish access to thermal refuge habitat, increase climate resiliency, and restore salmonid access to spawning and rearing habitat to benefit several Endangered Species Act-listed Lower Columbia River populations of salmon and steelhead.

Removal of these barriers and installation of new bridges at these locations will also enhance this key railroad corridor for the region, benefiting both Amtrak rail passenger services and BNSF freight traffic, supporting our economy and our environment.

Thank you for your full and fair consideration of the Cowlitz Indian Tribe's application.

Sincerely,

Maria Cantwell
United States Senator